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Chile: Abolition of DINA

Chilean President Pinochet's decision last week to abolish the National Intelligence Directorate appears to represent a further effort to curtail abuses of human rights and not just another cosmetic fix. Although the government's pronouncements cannot always be taken at face value, Pinochet has been under strong pressure from civilian and military advisors to strip DINA's wings.

The new guidelines suggest that most of DINA's personnel will be absorbed by a National Information Center to be created under the Interior Ministry. DINA's arrest and detention powers are being transferred to the national police (Carabineros) and to the Judicial Police under the Defense Ministry. While legal activity's still possible under this arrangement, it is our judgment that opportunities for repressive practices will be reduced.

The new agency apparently will

not report directly to the President, as DINA did.

Both the Carabineros and the Judicial Police are highly regarded, professional law-enforcement organizations.

Pinochet is now convinced that the Marxist threat to his regime has diminished significantly.

Other moves to liberalize the regime may be possible if the organization replacing DINA is restricted solely to information gathering and the President follows up on plans to reduce the state of siege and lift the curfew.

The direction taken by Pinochet during the past month reflects an awareness that other military governments in South America are formulating plans to return to civilian rule. The debate stimulated by this trend is likely to sustain momentum for political change in Chile.

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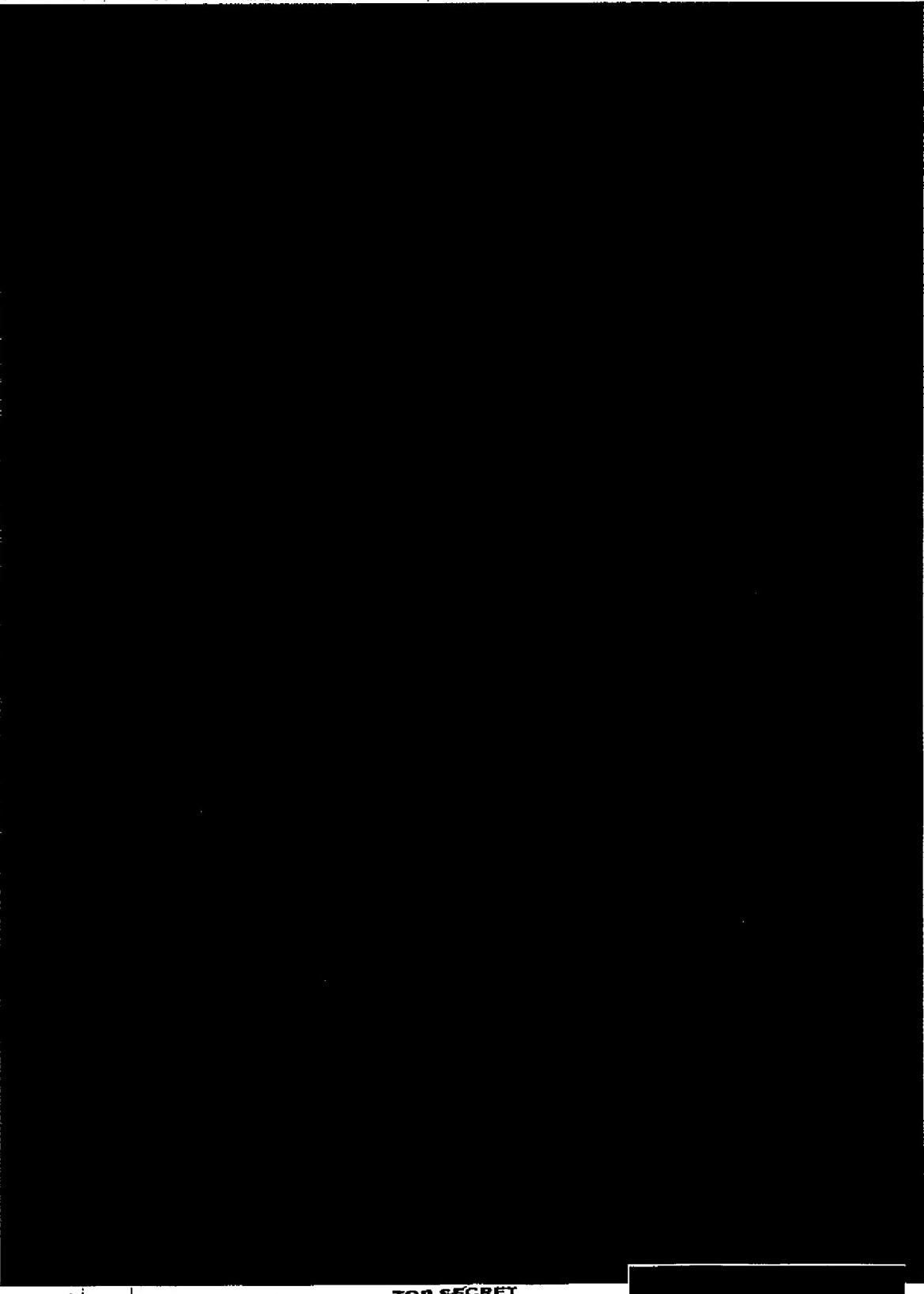
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| Most Chilean leaders appear to be gratified and encouraged by signs that the military at last is modifying the most severe aspects of repression. Even former President Pinochet, leader of the country's largest political party and a fervent critic of Pinochet, acknowledges that the dissolution of DINA might be a positive step.

| Despite official disclaimers to the contrary, Santiago has made substantial moves to meet US recommendations on human rights improvements. This latest shift reflects the government leaders' realization that Chile must strive to improve relations with the US. Chile's desire to improve its image in the world. Many observers have regarded Chile with contempt since the military seized power in (1973). The announcement of the abolition of DINA during the visit of US State Department official Tedesca appears to have been designed to have a maximum impact on Chile's relations with the US and to gain favorable international publicity for the change. [redacted]

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